

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 IO-14 OMB-01 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03

SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 H-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PRS-01

PA-04 USIA-15 PC-04 CU-04 NIC-01 SY-04 A-01 OPR-02

NEA-14 SCCT-02 SAM-01 ACDA-19 EUR-25 EB-11 DRC-01

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R 240947Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4636

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

CINCPAC

DEFENSE FOR DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 7510

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: INCREASED FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

REF (A) KUALA LUMPUR 2849

(B) KUALA LUMPUR 2940

BEGIN SUMMARY: MUSLIM REGEL ATTACKS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES HAVE INCREASED IN RECENT WEEKS EVIDENTLY TO EMBARRASS GOP WHILE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS WERE MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR. ALTHOUGH REBELS CAPPED ATTACKS BY ASSAULT ON MAJOR AIRPORT AND A HYDROELECTRIC FACILITY JUNE 20, INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN LESS THAN SPECTACULAR AND HAVE APPARENTLY FAILED TO DUPLICATE PROBLEMS FOR GOP CREATED BY DESTRUCTION OF JOLO CITY TWO WEEKS BEFORE FEBRUARY LAHORE SUMMIT MEETING. FOR ITS PART, GOP HAS AGAIN GIVEN HEAVY
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PLAY IN CONTROLLED PRESS TO PROGRAMS FOR MUSLIM MINORITY,

TO RP-INDONESIAN SOLIDARITY, AND TO FAVORABLE EXCERPTS FROM ISLAMIC CONFERENCE REPORTING. HELPING ENSURE POSITIVE HEARING IN KUALA LUMPUR OF GOP CASE ARE NEW GOP AMBASSADOR TO MALAYSIA AIDED BY TEAM OF SEVEN FILIPINO MUSLIMS. IT APPEARS FROM HERE THAT REBELS HAVE FAILED TO ADD TO GOP PROBLEMS AT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. FROM LIMITED REPORTING PRESENTLY AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY, IT APPEARS THAT MOST SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN REBEL INITIATED ACTIVITIES IN RECENT WEEKS HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THREE COTABATO PROVINCES OF MINDANAO BEGINNING JUNE 9. COTABATO AREA WAS OMINOUSLY QUIET IN APRIL AND MAY, AND INCREASE IN REBEL ACTIVITY WAS WIDELY EXPECTED. MOST INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN REBEL ATTACKS ON CHRISTIAN SETTLEMENTS AND HIGHWAY AMBUSHES. A BRIDGE SOUTH OF FOURTH PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY ZONE HEAD-QUARTERS IN PARANG WAS REPORTED DESTROYED AND THE ROAD SOUTH OF COTABATO CITY REPORTEDLY CLOSED. REBELS ATTACKED PHILIPPINE MILITARY POSITIONS AT COTABATO AIRPORT EARLY MORNING JUNE 20 USING 81MM MORTARS AND 50 CAL. MACHINE GUNS, BRIEFLY CLOSING AIRPORT. AFP FORCES HELD THEIR GROUND AND, WITH HELP OF AIR STRIKES AND ARTILLERY, WERE ABLE TO FORCE ATTACKERS TO WITHDRAW SOUTH BY JUNE 23. TWO APCs WERE DESTROYED; PERSONNEL LOSSES UNKNOWN. CONTRARY TO ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTS THAT SOME FIGHTING TOOK PLACE IN POPULATED SECTIONS OF COTABATO CITY, SENIOR PC OFFICER HAS STATED THAT FIGHTING NEAR CITY WAS LIMITED TO ATTACK ON AIRPORT.

2. ABOUT ONE HUNDRED REBELS ATTACKED HYDROELECTRIC PLANT AT MARIA CHRISTINA FALLS NEAR ILIGAN CITY, LANA DEL NORTE AT SAME TIME AS ATTACK ON COTABATO AIRPORT. ATTACKERS APPARENTLY FAILED TO CAUSE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THIS FACILITY, WHICH IS OF KEY IMPORTANCE TO ECONOMY OF NORTHERN MINDANAO.

3. IN TWO ZAMBOANGA PROVINCES THERE HAS ALSO BEEN INCREASE IN REBEL ACTIVITY, ALTHOUGH OFT-RUMORED ATTACK ON POPULOUS ZAMBOANGA CITY ITSELF HAS APPARENTLY NOT MATERIALIZED. AFP FORCES IN ZAMBOANGA AND ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH HAVE BEEN ON RED ALERT FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN EXPECTATION INCREASED REBEL ACTIVITY. FIGHTING CONTINUES ON JOLO, WHERE EIGHT AFP OFFICERS REPORTEDLY KILLED IN TWO AMBUSHES ON JUNE 10 AND 14. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF ANY SHARP INCREASES IN ATTACKS ABOVE NORMAL SITUATION IN SULUS.

4. AS OPENING OF FIFTH ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR APPROACHED, ARTICLES IN LOCAL CONTROLLED PRESS BLOSSOMED DETAILING GOP PROGRAMS FOR FILIPINO MUSLIMS. NEW ELEMENT IN OFFICIALLY-INSPIRED PUBLICITY HAS BEEN EFFUSIVE REFERENCES TO RP-INDONESIAN SOLIDARITY.

5. TO HELP SHAPE NEWS AT KUALA LUMPUR, AND PARTICULARLY TO COUNTER LIBYAN AND MNLF ACTIVITIES, GOP SCURRIED TO SEND NEW AMBASSADOR TO MALAYSIA BEFORE CONFERENCE OPENED. YUSUF ABUBAKAR, A MUSLIM NATIVE OF JOLO AND CAREER DIPLOMAT, WAS HURRIEDLY TRANSFERRED FROM CAIRO AND ACCREDITED JUNE 15. ABUBAKAR MADE PRESENTATION TO FOURTH ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN BENGHAZI IN 1973 AND IS WIDELY REGARDED AS A SKILLED AND EFFECTIVE SPOKESMAN FOR HIS COUNTRY. HE IS BEING ASSISTED DURING PRESENT PERIOD BY GROUP OF SEVEN FILIPINO MUSLIM GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

6. COMMENT: FROM AVAILABLE REPORTING IT APPEARS THAT FILIPINO MUSLIM REBELS HAVE FAILED TO DUPLICATE PROBLEMS FOR GOP CAUSED BY ATTACK AND SUBSEQUENT DESTRUCTION OF JOLO TWO WEEKS BEFORE LAST FEBRUARY'S ISLAMIC SUMMIT MEETING IN LAHORE. WITH ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ALMOST OVER, REBELS HAVE LITTLE REMAINING OPPORTUNITY TO EMBARRASS GOP.
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